In the specification:

Please replace paragraph number [0008], with the following amended paragraph:

[0008] In accordance with this invention, a process for making a running board assembly of a running board and an insert comprises providing ~~complimentary~~ complementary mold components having respective molding cavities. At least one of the mold components has at least one insert subcavity within the cavity of that mold component. The process includes providing an insert. The process further includes inserting the insert into the subcavity and applying vacuum pressure into the subcavity to hold the insert in place. A parison is then extruded between the mold components. The mold components are closed and the parison is expanded within the closed cavity of the mold components to simultaneously mold the running board and to integrate the insert and the running board to produce the running board assembly.

Please replace paragraph number [0021], with the following amended paragraph:

[0021] Figure 14 is a ~~cross-sectional~~ perspective view similar to Figure 4 showing an alternate embodiment, and

Please replace paragraph number [0024], with the following amended paragraph:

[0024] The running board 22 has an upper support surface 30. The step pad 24 is adhered to the supporting surface 30 in accordance with the process of this invention which is explained more fully below. The running board ~~20~~ 22 may be formed in a blow molding procedure. From review of Figure 2, it will be noted that the running board includes a plurality of recesses 32 which may be formed by moving components within a blow mold in a known fashion. The recesses 32 bring the internal surface of the parison in contact with an opposite portion to form a plurality of ribs. These ribs provide the structural strength to the blow molded running board so that it meets the necessary structural requirements. Any pattern of ribs may be formed so as to provide sufficient strength to the running board 22.

Please replace paragraph number [0025], with the following amended paragraph:

[0025] The process will now be explained in greater detail with reference to Figures 4 through 11. Figure 4 illustrates diagrammatically the blow molding mold 40. The blow molding mold comprises a first mold half or component 42 and a ~~complimentary~~ complementary mold half or component 44. Diagrammatically, the mold halves 42 and 44 are shown as being movable toward and away from each other by rams 46 and 48 respectively. The mold halves 42 and 44 each have supply conduits 50 and 52 respectively. The supply conduits 50 and 52 supply cooling fluids as need be. In addition, the supply conduit 52 also includes a source of vacuum pressure as will be explained more fully below.

Please replace paragraph number [0026], with the following amended paragraph:

[0026] The mold halves 42 and 44 each include a mold cavity. In the view illustrated in Figure 4, only the cavity 60 within mold half 44 is visible. The mold cavity 60 determines the shape of a portion of the running board and includes the necessary configuration to mold a substantial portion if not all of the support surface 30. The mold cavity 60 within the mold half ~~42~~ 44 also includes a subcavity 62. The subcavity 62 includes a configuration for molding a desired pattern on what will become the upper surface of a step pad.

Please replace paragraph number [0027], with the following amended paragraph:

[0027] In accordance with this aspect of the invention, a process includes providing a moldable step ~~pad~~ plate 70 and the extrusion of a parison 72. The parison 72 may be extruded from a well known extrusion head.

Please replace paragraph number [0028], with the following amended paragraph:

[0028] Figure 5 illustrates the movement of the step ~~pad~~ plate 70 to a position between the mold halves 42 and 44. Figure 6 illustrates the movement of the moldable step ~~pad~~ plate 70 into the cavity 60 of the mold half 44. Figure 7 illustrates the final position of the step plate 70 entirely within the subcavity 62. The movement of the step ~~pad~~ plate 70 as shown diagrammatically in Figures 4, 5, 6 an 7 can most easily be accomplished using a programmable robotic arm. A supply of step ~~pads~~ plate 70 may be located where they be grasped and extracted by one or more robot arms. The robot arm moves the moldable step ~~pad~~ plate 70 until it is placed within the subcavity 62. Once the robot arm has placed the movable step ~~pad~~ plate 70 within the subcavity 62, then vacuum pressure, available from supply conduit 52 is applied to the subcavity 62, so that the moldable step plate 70 is retained and accurately positioned within the subcavity 62. The robot arm then retracts so that it is no longer located between the mold halves 42 and 44. When that has been completed, the parison 72 is extruded to extend between the mold halves as shown in Figures 7 and 8, Figure 8 illustrates the completion of the extrusion of the parison and the mold halves are now ready to be closed about the parison.

Please replace paragraph number [0031], with the following amended paragraph:

[0031] The vacuum pressure applied to the ~~submold~~ subcavity 62 is intended primarily to hold the moldable step plate 70 in place. If the moldable step plate has not been raised to a temperature close to its molding temperature, no substantial molding of the step plate 70 will occur under the vacuum force alone. However, when the blow molding gas is supplied to the interior of the parison 72, the parison is at a moldable temperature and the parison will then expand within the mold 40. As the parison expands, a portion of the parison will then come into contact with the moldable step plate 70. This will result in the transfer of heat from the wall of the parison to the moldable step plate 70. In addition, as the parison 72 continues to expand, it will deliver

substantial pressure to the moldable step plate 70 and forcing it against the pattern included within the subcavity 62.

Please replace paragraph number [0036], with the following amended paragraph:

[0036] The running board assembly 20 shown in Figure 1 includes a step pad 24. The step pad 24 is incorporated into the running board assembly ~~10~~ 20 by means of thermal fusion between the step pad 24 and the running board 22 which occurs during the blow molding process. In accordance with an alternate aspect of the invention, the step pad need not be comprised of a moldable material nor a material that will thermally fuse with the material of the running board.

Please replace paragraph number [0041], with the following amended paragraph:

[0041] Once the step pad is held in place by the vacuum pressure, then a parison 72 is extruded between the mold halves ~~42~~ 142 and 144, the mold is closed and a blowing pressure is applied to the interior of the parison. As the parison expands under the blowing pressure, a portion of the wall of the parison will encounter the surface of the step pad 124 which includes the plurality of key shaped ribs 128. The raised portions 125 of the step pad 124 will bear against the surface of the subcavity 162.

Please replace paragraph number [0043], with the following amended paragraph:

[0043] Reference is now made to Figures 1, 2, 3 and 15. As shown, the running board assembly 20 includes a trim strip 26. The trim strip may be a moldable plastic which can thermally fuse with the parison ~~70~~ 72 as the running board 22 is formed. Alternatively, the trim strip 26 may be manufactured from a material which does not thermally fuse with the running board ~~20~~ 22. In this regard, the trim strip 26 may be a metallic strip similar to the step pad 124.

Please replace paragraph number [0044], with the following amended paragraph:

[0044] The trim strip 26 is in the form of an insert which may be positioned within a mold half 43 in a manner analogous to the step ~~pad~~ plate 70 or the step ~~plate~~ pad124. In order to accomplish this, there may be a separate subcavity 263. The subcavity 263 may either be in the same mold half as the subcavity 62 or in the other mold half. While the trim strip 26 may use a similar retention means as the ribs 128 of step pad 124, an alternate retention system is shown in the enlarged view of Figure 3 and 15.